



**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES  
DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER**

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August 19, 2009

TO: Supervisor Don Knabe, Chairman  
Supervisor Gloria Molina  
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas  
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky  
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

FROM: Wendy L. Watanabe  
Auditor-Controller

SUBJECT: **VISTA DEL MAR FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY CONTRACT REVIEW – A  
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES PROVIDER**

We have completed a contract compliance review of Vista Del Mar Foster Family Agency (Vista Del Mar or Agency), a Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) provider.

**Background**

DCFS contracts with Vista Del Mar, a private non-profit community-based organization to recruit, train and certify foster care parents for the supervision of children DCFS places in foster care. Once the Agency places a child, it is required to monitor the placement until the child is discharged from the program.

Vista Del Mar is required to hire qualified social workers to provide case management and act as a liaison between DCFS and foster parents. The Agency oversees a total of eight certified foster homes in which nine DCFS children were placed at the time of our review. Vista Del Mar is located in the Second District.

DCFS pays Vista Del Mar a negotiated monthly rate, per child placement, established by the California Department of Social Services' (CDSS) Foster Care Rates Bureau. Based on the child's age, Vista Del Mar receives between \$1,589 and \$1,865 per month, per child. Out of these funds, the Agency pays the foster parents between \$624 and \$790 per month, per child. DCFS paid Vista Del Mar approximately \$197,000 during Fiscal Year 2008-09.

### **Purpose/Methodology**

The purpose of our review was to determine whether Vista Del Mar was providing the services outlined in their Program Statement and the County contract. We reviewed certified foster parent files, children's case files, personnel files and interviewed Vista Del Mar staff. We also visited a number of certified foster homes and we interviewed several children and foster parents.

### **Results of Review**

The foster parents indicated that the services they received from Vista Del Mar generally met their expectations and the children indicated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents. In addition, Vista Del Mar ensured that foster parents were certified in compliance with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.

Vista Del Mar needs to ensure that foster homes, Needs and Services Plans (NSPs) and Termination Reports are in compliance with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. We specifically noted the following:

- One (33%) of the three homes visited was very cluttered and messy. For example, boxes, furniture, lamps, and other unwanted items were scattered all over the kitchen and living room.
- Two (66%) of the three homes visited did not adequately secure detergents and cleaning solutions.
- One (33%) of the three homes visited had a window safety device in the child's bedroom that was obstructed by a large bookshelf. The placement of the bookshelf made it difficult to release the window safety device in an emergency. In addition, both the foster parent and the child did not know how to release the safety device.
- One (33%) of the three homes visited was not conducting disaster drills with the child at least every six months.
- None (100%) of the three NSPs reviewed contained goals that were measurable and specific.
- One (33%) of the three children's case files reviewed did not contain documentation that the child was informed of the Agency's policies and procedures during orientation as required.

- Four (80%) of the five Termination Reports reviewed did not contain a closing summary of the Agency's records related to placement or the reason the children's placement ended.
- Two (66%) of the three social workers case files reviewed did not contain documentation that the social workers received ongoing annual in-service training.

The details of our review along with recommendations for corrective action are attached.

### **Review of Report**

We discussed our report with Vista Del Mar on April 30, 2009. In their response (Attachment I), Vista Del Mar management indicates the actions they have taken to implement the recommendations. We also notified DCFS of the results of our review. In their response (Attachment II), DCFS indicates they will follow up on our recommendations during their next monitoring review tentatively scheduled for September 2009.

We thank Vista Del Mar for their cooperation and assistance during this review. Please call me if you have any questions or your staff may contact Don Chadwick at (213) 253-0301.

WLW:MMO:JET:DC:AA

#### **Attachments**

c: William T Fujioka, Chief Executive Officer  
Patricia S. Ploehn, Director, Department of Children and Family Services  
Ted Myers, Chief Deputy Director, Department of Children and Family Services  
Susan Kerr, Senior Deputy Director, Department of Children and Family Services  
Joel Mogy, Chairman of the Board of Directors, Vista Del Mar FFA  
Jill Boyer, Program Director, Vista Del Mar FFA  
Jean Chen, Community Care Licensing  
Public Information Office  
Audit Committee

**FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY PROGRAM  
VISTA DEL MAR FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY  
FISCAL YEAR 2008-09**

**BILLED SERVICES**

**Objective**

Determine whether Vista Del Mar Foster Family Agency (Vista Del Mar or Agency) provided program services in accordance with their County contract and California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Title 22 regulations.

**Verification**

We visited three of the eight Los Angeles County certified foster homes that Vista Del Mar billed the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) in June and July 2008 and interviewed three foster parents and two children placed in the three homes. In addition, we reviewed the case files for four foster parents and three children and we reviewed the Agency's monitoring activity.

**Results**

The foster parents indicated that the services they received from the Agency generally met their expectations and the children indicated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents. Vista Del Mar needs to ensure that foster homes are in compliance with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations and that Needs and Services Plans (NSPs) and Termination Reports contain all the required information. We specifically noted the following:

**Foster Home Visitation**

- One (33%) of the three homes visited was very cluttered and messy. For example, boxes, furniture, lamps, and other unwanted items were scattered all over the kitchen and living room.
- Two (66%) of the three homes visited did not adequately secure detergents and cleaning solutions.
- One (33%) of the three homes visited had a window safety device in the child's bedroom that was obstructed by a large bookshelf. The placement of the bookshelf made it difficult to release the window safety device in an emergency. In addition, both the foster parent and the child did not know how to release the safety device.

- One (33%) of the three homes visited was not conducting disaster drills with the child at least every six months.

**Needs and Services Plans, Children's Case Files, and Termination Reports**

- None (100%) of the three NSPs reviewed contained goals that were measurable and specific.
- One (33%) of the three children's case files reviewed did not contain documentation that the child was informed of the Agency's policies and procedures during orientation as required.
- Four (80%) of the five Termination Reports reviewed did not contain a closing summary of the Agency's records related to placement or the reason the children's placement ended.

**Recommendations**

**Vista Del Mar management ensure:**

1. **Staff adequately monitor foster homes to ensure they comply with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.**
2. **Foster parents adequately secure detergents, cleaning solutions, and other items that could pose a potential safety hazard to children.**
3. **Foster homes are maintained in accordance with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.**
4. **Foster parents conduct and document disaster drills with children upon placement and every six months thereafter.**
5. **NSPs contain goals that are measurable and specific.**
6. **Children receive a comprehensive overview of the Agency's policies and procedures during orientation.**
7. **Termination Reports contain all of the required information.**

**CLIENT VERIFICATION****Objective**

Determine whether the program participants received the services that Vista Del Mar billed to DCFS.

**Verification**

We interviewed two children placed in three Vista Del Mar certified foster homes and three foster parents to confirm the services the Agency billed to DCFS.

**Results**

The foster parents indicated that the services they received from the Agency generally met their expectations and the foster children indicated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents.

**Recommendation**

None.

**STAFFING/CASELOAD LEVELS****Objective**

Determine whether Vista Del Mar social workers' caseloads do not exceed fifteen placements and whether the supervising social worker does not supervise more than six social workers as required by the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.

**Verification**

We interviewed Vista Del Mar's administrator and reviewed caseload statistics and payroll records for the Agency's social workers.

**Results**

Overall, Vista Del Mar's three social workers carried an average caseload of two cases and the Agency's supervising social worker supervised an average of three social workers.

**Recommendation**

None.

**STAFFING QUALIFICATIONS****Objective**

Determine whether Vista Del Mar staff possess the education and work experience qualifications required by the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. In addition, determine whether the Agency conducted hiring clearances prior to hiring their staff and provided ongoing training to staff.

**Verification**

We interviewed Vista Del Mar's administrator and reviewed each staff's personnel file for documentation to confirm their education and work experience qualifications, hiring clearances and ongoing training.

**Results**

Vista Del Mar's administrator and supervising social worker possessed the education and work experience required by CDSS Title 22 regulations. In addition, the Agency conducted hiring clearances prior to hiring their staff and provided ongoing training to staff working on the County contract. However, two of the three social workers did not have documentation indicating that the social workers received ongoing annual in-service training.

**Recommendation**

8. **Vista Del Mar management ensure that social workers receive ongoing annual in-service training.**

Joel R. Magy  
Chairman, Board of Directors

Elias Lefferman, Ph.D.  
President/Chief Executive Officer



May 14, 2009

To: Supervisor Don Knabe, Chair  
Supervisor Gloria Molina  
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas  
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky  
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

From: Jill Boyer, MSW  
Program Director, Community Services

Subject: Vista Del Mar Foster Family Agency Contract Review – A Department of  
Children and Family Services Provider

We have completed our response to the recommendations made on the Foster Family  
Agency contract review report by the Auditor Controller:

1. **Staff adequately monitors foster homes to ensure they comply with the  
County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.**

*Vista ASW went to the identified foster home the same day that this issue was brought to the attention of Program Director in August 2008. The bookshelf was moved. Child and foster parent demonstrated to ASW the proper release of the safety devices on the window, to allow it to open from the inside. Foster mother instructed that window needs to remain unobstructed at all times. ASW has continued to observe during scheduled home visits that the window remains unobstructed. Training held with social workers to review Title 22 Regulations and to insure compliance by all foster agency parents.*

*The same foster home was identified as being "very cluttered and messy" in August 2008. Foster mother was instructed by agency social worker to eliminate the clutter and to create easy access between front door and all rooms. ASW revisited the home and the situation was corrected. Foster mother was reminded that ASW would continue to monitor the home for clutter and accessibility. ASW has continued to insure by inspection that clutter does not accumulate. Training held with social workers to review Title 22 Regulations and to insure compliance by all foster agency parents.*



2. **Foster parents adequately secure detergents, cleaning solutions, and other items that could pose a potential safety hazard to children.**

*Vista ASW will ensure that detergents, cleaning solutions and other items that could pose a potential safety hazard to children will be locked and secured. Training held with social workers to review Title 22 Regulations and to insure compliance by all foster agency parents.*

3. **Foster homes are maintained in accordance with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.**

*In both instances, foster home was immediately notified of deficiency and social workers went to home to inspect for corrections. Foster parents were reminded that ASW's would continuously monitor for CDSS Title 22 Regulation mandate for Foster Homes in August 2008 to maintain a safe environment. Training held with social workers to review Title 22 Regulations and to insure compliance by all foster agency parents.*

4. **Foster parents conduct and document disaster drills with children upon placement and every six months thereafter.**

*Social Workers will insure that disaster drills are conducted at six-month intervals by records kept in foster homes.*

5. **NSP's contain goals that are measurable and specific.**

*Program Director conducted a staff meeting with ASW's to instruct the ASW's need to write goals in the NSP's that were measurable and specific. DCFS requirements were reviewed. ASW's NSP have continuously been reviewed and monitored for correctness with time-limited, measurable and specific goals.*

6. **Children receive a comprehensive overview of the Agency's policies and procedures during orientation.**

*This will be assured by the inclusion of placement packet and the signing of the statement acknowledging newly placed child's orientation to the agency and Foster Home, which includes the following forms:*

- a. Personal Rights*
- b. Grievance brochure*
- c. Policies related to Discipline*
- d. Statement Regarding Discharge of Clients*

*These forms will be signed by the child or child's representative, foster parent/s and Vista ASW. Vista ASW will continuously monitor for compliance*

*by foster parent and Agency Program and will continue to be supervised by Program Director.*

**7. Termination Reports contain all the required information.**

*The necessity of insuring that closing summaries for DCFS children include specific information as to why the child left placement, where he/she went, date the placement ended, and information about the adjustment of child to placement. All closing summaries are currently being reviewed by Program Director.*

**8. Vista Del Mar management ensure that social workers receive ongoing annual in-service training.**

*Community Services Program Director and ASW's meet on a weekly basis to review case issues and to insure compliance with Title 22 Regulations, DCFS case plans, etc. In addition, staff attend at least 6 clinical trainings annually which are provided by Vista Del Mar.*

We appreciate the opportunity to participate in the review by Auditor Controller Staff Cassandra Youngblood in August of 2008. Her feedback was taken seriously and recommendations for improvement were immediately implemented. Weekly staff meetings and weekly individual supervisions with ASW's, insure the enforcement of Title 22, DCFS and CCL Regulations. Our goal continues to be to provide the best services to our children and families.

Please contact me if additional information is needed at (310)836-1223 x 288.

Sincerely,  
  
Jill Boyer, MSW  
Community Services Program Director



PATRICIA S. PLOEHN, LCSW  
Director

**County of Los Angeles  
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES**

425 Shatto Place, Los Angeles, California 90020  
(213) 351-5602

July 16, 2009

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TO: Aggie Alonso, Chief Accountant-Auditor  
Countywide Contract Monitoring Division

FROM: Elizabeth A. Howard, Section Head  
Out of Home Care Management Division  
Foster Family Agency/Group Home Performance Management

**DCFS RESPONSE TO THE AUDITOR CONTROLLER'S CONTRACT REVIEW OF VISTA  
DEL MAR FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY**

The Out of Home Care Management Division (OHCMD) has reviewed the Auditor-Controller's (A-C) July 14, 2009 final draft report of the contract compliance review of Vista Del Mar FFA. Although, the report notes several programmatic issues, there were no safety issues which required an immediate response from DCFS.

We will conduct a follow-up review based on the A-C's recommendations, which is tentatively scheduled for September 2009.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (626) 569-6804.

MG:EAH:NF

C: Wendy L. Watanabe, Auditor-Controller  
Patricia Ploehn, Director, DCFS  
Lisa Parrish, Deputy Director, DCFS  
Marilynne Garrison, Division Chief, DCFS

*"To Enrich Lives Through Effective and Caring Service"*

